Bella Coola Indians - Orgn Myths

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ORIGIN MYTH OF NUSXEQ.

As has been stated, it is common to add details from a mere story to a family myth in order to increase its length and importance. The writer feels certain that this has been done with the following, in spite of the fact that Boas (P. 53) records this myth in greater detail than the writer was able to obtain. A second version was obtained from a most reliable informant who recounted it as a mere story without hesitation. Of course he may have been ignorant that it was the myth of another family, but the writer feels that this is unlikely. The type of myth itself strongly supports the view that details of the usual "story" type have been added to it.

Origin Myth of Sa tsk .

In the beginning of time Alquntam constructed an abelone-shell covered post which reached from Nusmat a to Altwolsqamus, a mountain near the Kimsquit River, not far from its mouth. To this place two brothers came from above, Smao n, "The First One", and his younger brother Omqomkil ka. The former flew down as an eagle, but the latter, in raven form, swarmed down the post which vanished after he had reached the earth. Alquntam had given Omqomkil ka a box containing sockeye salmon with instructions to release them in the ocean where they would increase rapidly to serve as food for him and his elder brother. He also taught the two how to build a salmon-weir to catch the fish. The two brothers climbed down the mountain-side to a place at the mouth of the Kimsquit River where Omqomkil ka became a man, and sent back his Raven cloak above. He then released the salmon as he had been instructed, and also another present from Alquntam, a matsqus, (1) which was to serve as bait not only to fish but to wealth and goods.

a Smao n spread his wings, like a mother hen, to shelter his younger brother.

Smao n declined immediately to assume human form, so set out travelling while his longer brother, sad at being thus left alone, started to make a salmon-weir. Smao n planned to make a circuit of the world, and started northward, seeking a suitable place to settle, in eagle form. Wherever he went he scattered eagle down, which is the reason that this material has ever since been highly regarded, and is used as a symbol of peace. Owing, moreover to the eagle down scattered on the mountains there has always been much snow at Kimsquit. Another record of his travel is that the clouds which float over Kimsquit before a west wind are always called "Smao n's clouds." (2). Sometimes as he travelled he assumed the form of the sun, for he was so powerful that nothing was impossible to him. Far in the north Smao n obtained an enormous copper, which he carried back to Kimsquit without completing his original plan of circling the earth. He perched on a tree near his brother's almost completed salmon-weir.

"Why don't you change yourself to a human being?" Omqomkil ka inquired.

"I am waiting until our food is more plentiful," Smao n replied. "Besides I have

been to the far north where I obtained an enormous copper."

When the weir was completed and Omqomkil ka was catching many salmon his brother at last decided to become a man. But instead of sending his cloak back above he animated it, as an eagle. Smao n had now become an ardent fisherman and was much annoyed by the thefts made by the eagle, though he himself was responsible for the bird not having returned to Nusmat a. After about a year he suggested to Omqomkil ka that they should kill the bird, but the latter demurred, since it was the guise which Alquntam had given Smao n. Smao n said nothing, but the next time he saw the eagle stealing his fish he killed the bird, without consulting his brother. No sooner had he done this than he felt sorry, but it was too late, he could not restore the eagle to life.

Owing to the salmon given them by Alquntam the two brothers were now very prosperous, and Smao n began to think of marriage. One day he noticed some chips floating down the Salmon River, so he judged that people must be living on that stream. He set out to investigate, met Yealos, and married his sister Sximana, as has been described in a Salmon River myth. (1). To celebrate this event the two brothers prepared to invite people from far and near. First they lengthened their house to accommodate a large number of people; it was of the type known as tcakwalotl, though it could not expand without human agency. Then they painted their spoons with designs of the matsqus, since they had brought that creature with them from above. Now all was ready and they summoned their guests. When all had assembled, Smao n gave a tlaiyak m dance to commemorate the killing of the eagle. He used as text for his song how he had come to this earth and how he had slain the bird which had been his own cloak. This dance was duly validated by presents of salmon, and has since been carried out by the descendants of Smao n. It is assumed that the concept of such a dance was given to him by Alquntam before he left Nusmat a, but he used his own discretion on this earth as to the actual reason for it.

(1). See page .

At this gathering of people, ~~xxxxx~~ virtually a potlatch, Smao n validated for himself the name~~x~~ Anuqptalaix, "What fill people." He chose this name ~~in con-~~ with reference to ~~sequence of~~ the countless salmon caught in his weir.

Smao n next travelled to Bella Bella seeking a wife. His fame and wealth was so well known that he was able to wed T̓akwait̓, the daughter of a powerful chief. She had the valued prerogative of wailing, a right which had been duly validated by presents. Her father told her that when she was going with Smao n to Kimsquit she would pass Yuyul mx, a man who had been turned to stone at the mouth of the Kimsquit River, and that unless she wailed as she passed him her children would be unable to enjoy this prerogative. The reason for this injunction is not now understood, it is merely recognized that as Yuyul mx became stone near Smao n's home he became, in some manner, a kwa̓it nta. As the canoe bearing T̓akwait̓ passed Yuyul mx she began to wail and weep, nor could her husband soothe here. He, for his part, told his herald, whose name was Nust̓iuq, to call out as follows:

"Hello! Kwa̓it ntao. Our chief has married a Bella Bella woman, as you are his kwa̓it nta, so are you here."

When Nust̓iuq had called this a second time the stonem man answered. ~~XXXX~~

T̓akwait̓ brought her husband several valuable prerogatives, a s aok dance and some dyed cedar-bark. with the large cone-shaped whistles, ~~xxx~~ several kusiut dance rights, According to one of Smao n's descendants, this is how the s aok ritual reached Kimsquit. Among the Bella Bella whales can only be eaten by chiefs, and ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ Smao n received this right from his father-in-law. The latter also gave his son-in-law a dead whale, while they towed behind the canoe towards Kimsquit. But Smao n knew that his people would object to a whale being brought into the river since there was a firm belief that that would drive away the salmon. Accordingly, he beached the carcass in the fiord and there dried the meat in ~~the~~ smoke.

Smao n now determined to give an elaborate potlatch at which he planned to portray his prerogative with regard to the whale. ~~After some search~~ he decided to build his new house ~~xx~~ of the semi-subterranean type, and when it was finished he had the design of a whale painted on the back wall. He invited guests from all parts of the coast and validated by valuable presents to them a new . e which he

had chosen for himself, Nusapania sta, "The Place for Catching Salmon." This name was applicable because his house was built on the west bank of the Kimsquit River at a good place for catching salmon.

Smao n next went to the land of the X xais Indians, a branch of the Carriers living nort-east of Kimsquit, where he married Wat s, the daughter of a chief. From her he received the right to use a xx x form of s saok whistle that imitated the voice of a deer. It was impossible to learn details of this whistle since my informant had never used it in his potlatches and claimed to be unwilling to tell the facts in consequence. Soon afte his return with his bride, Smao n called guests from far and near to another potlatch, at which he duly validated the name xtɬikmosaix, "The Circuit." He chose this name with reference to his first travels when seeking a suitable place to settle. He used his own discretion in choosing the name.

About this time Smao n married yet another woman, daughter of a Salmon River chief. These marriages so increased his wealth and fame that he was able to give numerous potlatches and validate several names which he xx chose for himself from incidents that had happened to him xx since reaching this world. Among these names were:

S nxalotɬa; a s saok name meaning "Sun". He chose this name in consequence of his transformation to the sun when first travelling around the world. At one potlatch he performed a s saok dance with respect to this name.

xxalxotsaix: a chief's name which he took when he gave away valuable presents. It means "The Going Around", and refers again to his circuit of the world.

Aɬqox nk m: a chief's name which he validated by valuable presents. X It means, "The Shelterer", a reference to the manner in which he sheltered his raven brother beneath his eagle wings when he first came to earth.

M Omqomkil ka lacked his brother's power and ability, so he married only one wife. Her name was Tlaxwos, also called Snutkanals, the xxxxxxx sister of Noakila.(1) Ever since that time there have been intermarriages between the people of the Kimsquit and Salmon Rivers, as if this first marriage had "Opened the Way."

(1). See page .

Although the Bella Coola is sufficiently logical to demand an explanation for everything, once a belief has been formulated he ceases to inquire whether it is possible. Thus, in all these accounts of the first people of the world the reader wonders how it was that there were enough people in the world so soon after its settlement to make potlatches possible. Who were the musicians? Who formed the bulk of the guests? Such questions do not strike the Bella Coola as obvious; the stories have been handed down as facts, he believes them, and thinks no more about the subject. If a question should be asked him, he would merely say that the people must have increased very rapidly, and add that anything was possible in those early days before man had lost his supernatural power.

After some time, though whether before or after his fourth marriage is not known, Sximana bore Smao n a son. And within a few years he had a large family. Owing to his great wealth he was able to give numerous potlatches, at which he validated names for his children. One of these was As xan m, which was the name he had given to his salmon-weir. This name has been used by his descendants as a child's name ever since. As time went on, his children grew into manhood and he validated for them seats in the house. He also arranged marriages for them. His eldest son, whose mother was Sximana, had the names ~~Ła~~łoxman a, the meaning of which is unknown, and Ałuskman aix, "The most important of all chiefs' sons." Smao n had arranged marriages for this young man with four women, but ~~Ła~~łoxman a was so ugly that only one of his wives, ugly as himself, would have anything to do with him. His only real friend was a younger brother, aged about twelve years, who was his constant companion. The brother's name was Ałkexa.

One day ~~Ła~~łoxman a became so embittered and disgusted at his own ugliness that he went away, determined never to return, and not caring whither he went. As provisions he carried only a goat bladder filled with goat marrow. This prevents hunger and is never exhausted, no matter how long the hunter may be absent. Ałkexa saw his elder brother depart and determined to accompany him. ~~Ła~~łoxman a allowed him to come with him for about ten miles, up the valley of the Kimsquit River, where he shot some merganser which he asked Ałkexa to take back as a present to his parents. Ałkexa was unwilling, nor could he be dissuaded from following, even

when ·wian a told him he was going off to die.

So the two camped for the night, and next morning continued their journey up the valley of the Kimsquit River, a region then unknown. Ła·oxman a was very sad at the thought of the hardships which his younger brother would have to endure, but he could see no way in which to persuade him to return. On and on they pressed, camping at night, their only food being the goat marrow which Ła·oxman a carried. Far up the river they followed an affluent from the left, and from its valley climbed the bare mountainy which, though they knew it not, is the watershed between the Kimsquit and Kitlobe Rivers. Here,above the tree-line, they met a wolf. It lowered its ears, hummed, walked a few paces along a path, stopped and looked back, is if it wished to guide the two wanderers. They decided to follow the animal which, once assured that the two were actually following, led them down a path on the further side of the mountain. After some time they saw some gulls, a cheering sight since it presaged a river. On and on they went, till at dusk they cam to a streamm, the head-waters of the Kitlobe River, though of this they were ignorant. Here they met Sa tma.

"Where are you going?" the supernatural one asked. "I can see by your face that you are melancholy."

Ła·oxman a told him all his woes, how his wives had deserted him on account of his ugliness, and how accordingly he had wandered away, careless of his fate. Sa tma inserted his fingers in Ła·oxman a's mouth and the latter vomitted. Sa tma examined the vomit and found some of the water in which dry dog salmon had been soaked.

"That is why your wives left you," he said. "It is filthy stuff, no wonder they would not let you come close to them. But I shall beautify you."

Sa tma first massaged Ła·oxman a's face, until he was very handsome. Then the supernatural one rubbed his whole body so that, when he had finished, the ugly youth had been changed to a very handsome one. Finally Ła·oxman a passed between Sa tma's legs, went around his body, sunwise, and again passed between his legs. He did this four times, thereby a shaman; and Sa tma gave him his own stick, which had the power of life and death.

"Now," said Sa tma, "I know that you were married to four women, but that only one of them was faithful to you. When you return home, handsome as you are, your wives will all ask you to take them back, but you must cherish only the ugly one, she who was faithful to you when you yourself were repulsive. You will be able to make her beautiful, even as you yourself are."

When he had said this, Sa tma vanished.

Still guided by the wolf, the two brothers continued their journey and at evening reached the district on the Kitlobe River known as Tniqo. Here they spent the night in a large cave. In the morning the trail was so bad that Alkexa decided not to attempt going any further. Ła̱oxman a divided his goat marrow with him and told his brother he would not be long absent. On he went, confident that he would soon come to a settlement because Sa tma had told him there was one on the river. Presently he saw trees that had been felled by axes, then smoke, and finally a village on the opposite bank of the river. Here the wolf left him.

Ła̱oxman a had carried with him on his travels a bear-skin blanket and some eagle down. He put these on, and went to a spot immediately opposite the village. Some children were the first to notice him, and they ran home saying that they had seen a supernatural being; this was because Ła̱oxman a was so beautiful, and because the children could not understand his speech. The Kitlobe chief, K psalopst, bade some of his people ferry the stranger across the river, and when this was done, he welcomed Ła̱oxman a to his house. All the people gathered in his house to see the stranger guest; it was the first time that the people of Kimsquit and Kitlobe knew of each other. Owing to his supernatural power, Ła̱oxman a was able to talk to them, and when he mentioned his father's name, Smao n, they all knew of him, his fame had travelled even to that distant spot. (1). K psalopst asked him whether he wished a wife, and when Ła̱oxman a had answered in the affirmative, he allowed him to marry his daughter Wis mkil k.

For two years Ła̱oxman a dwelt in Kitlobe, until he spoke the language perfectly and was regarded as one of themselves. By this t me he had two children, the eldest a boy named Qaiyu, and the younger a girl named Wanq̱. At this time he

(1) The myth does not explain how the Kitlobe people had heard of Smao n if this was the first time they had heard of Kimsquit.

thought of Alkexa, waiting in the cave on the upper waters of the river which he now knew was the Tsi is, Kitlobe, and of his parents who must long ago have abandoned all hope for their missing sons. He told his friends that he wished to return, and told them of his brother. A number of his friends volunteered to go with him, so when Lalokwana set out he was accompanied not only by his wife, his children, and four slaves belonging to his father-in-law, but also by a large number of young Kitlobe men. Knowing the route, they reached the cave within a single day. But instead of finding Alkexa, all that was there was his bones, scattered by animals. At this his Kitlobe friends lamented, but Lalokwana, unperturbed, merely collected the bones and laid on them the stick he had received from Sa'ama. Instantly Alkexa was restored to life, and he rubbed his eyes as if awakening from a heavy sleep. The socket joint from one hip had been carried away by some animal, so that when Alkexa arose he was lame. That is why so many Kitlobe Indians are lame, even to the present day, in spite of the fact that Alkexa himself never visited Kitlobe. The restored youth was very weak from death, so for two days the whole party tarried at the cave, administering strengthening food to him. To pass the time Lalokwana executed some wonderful paintings on the cave wall, which remain to the present day, as if petrified. When Alkexa was well enough to travel, Lalokwana massaged him to give him beauty equal to his own, and then the whole party continued on their way.

carrying olachen grease, for which Kitlobe is famous, as a present to Smaon.

Meanwhile, in Kimsquit, Smaon and Sximana had long despaired of ever again seeing their sons, and a mourning ceremony was taking place. At this juncture someone saw a party of strangers, and wondered who they might be as they entered the town. There was great rejoicing when the two brothers told their parents who they were, for they had been so transformed that they were unrecognizable. As Sa'ama had said, Lalokwana's three ugly wives came rushing up, eager to have him take them back, but he paid no attention to them. But he welcomed his ugly wife, who had mourned for him, and massaged her until she became the most beautiful of all.

Smaon, delighted at the safe return of his children, and proud of Lalokwana's beautiful children, sent invitations far and near to a great potlatch. At this ceremony he validated, with many presents, a seat in the house for Lalok[illegible]a. The name

thus confirmed was Spatcaɬ ɬt, "The First Born", a name given to ɬaɬoxman a by K psalopst, Smao n also took this opportunity to validate mxay names for his numerous grandchildren. After sujourning for some time in Kimsquit the Kitlobe people returned home, richly laden with gifts.

In the course of time Wis mkil k bore her husband two more children. Smao n continued to prosper and to give potlatches. At one of these he conferred on one of his grandchildren the name Stalt mx, "Chief"x He used his own discretion in the xhx choice of this name, but it at once became an honourable designation on account of the goods expehded. ɬaɬoxman a did no' wish to forget his Kitlobe friends, so in time he sent two of his children to live there. One of them was Stalt mx, and ever since, that name has remained in Kimsx Kitlobe. Thus friendly relations between Kimsquit and Kitlobe, first opened by ɬaɬoxman a, have been maintained. There have been frequent marriages between people of these two areas, each knows of ɬaɬoxman a, and it was only about one hundred and fifty years ago that a Kimsquit woman, Atsqtutɬ by name, was married to a Kitlobe man to repay the original marriage of Wixmxi Wis mkil k.

When Smao n became old he gave yet another potlatch at which he took for himself the name ɬiɬixwnimut, "The Scatterer". He created this name from his own fertile imagination, with reference to the way in which he scattered eagle down when first travelling to the north in eagle form. It has since been used by his descendants when old.

The descendants of Smao n enjoy not only the prerogative of using this myth and the names included in it, but also other privileges connected with it. If one of them gives a potlatch he carves the form of a matsqus on the spoons to be used at it, and paints the wall of his house with a whale design. Omqomkil ka's descendants are more likely than othe s to receive supernatural good fortune (i) from a matsqus. The descendants of bothe brothers have the right, moreover, to hunt sx and collect food in the places used by these first ancestors. The areas so authorized are:

Aɬtwolsqamus, the mountain where they first came to earth.

Okqomax, a valley leading into the main valley of the Kimsquit River where Omqomkil ka was accustomed to hunt.

Nutxa ktɬ, where Smao n's wives were accustomed to pick berries.

The place in the Kimsquit River where their salmon-weir was s. ed.

The length of this myth and the wealth of detail embodied in it, raises the question of whther it is a myth of the usual type, or represents a combination of several stories strung together and given to the writer by an Indian eager to glorify the traditions of his own ancestors. It was received from Jim Pollard, a Kimsquit Indian, descended from Smao n, and himself the user of this name, a most valuable and reliable informant. Jim is a man of great ability, who has given more potlatches than any other Indian of either Bella Coola or Kimsquit, and who, accordingly has been able to validate very fully his ancestral myths and the names embodied therein. Owing to the deaths of his relatives Jim has hmmmmthm been able to use names and portions of this myth which otherwise could certainly have belonged to others. In this respect, the above myth represents a combined form, but it is a combination quite proper to the Indian mind. In fact, theoretically, every myth would be complete if it were not for the parts possessed by others, and the aim of every wise Bella Coola is to seek the return of these pieces by judicious marriage. Jim has been able to achieve this by the death of his relatives, and the assistance of his wife, herself a descendant of Smao n. Before the coming of the white man and the consequent dwindling of population, it is unlikely that any one man would have the duly validated right to tell a myth of this length, but theoretically it was possible, and might have been done by anyone as superior to his fellows as Jim is to the present Indians of Kimsquit.

Atixw nk: a level tract of country on the bank of the Kimsquit River a few miles from its mouth. No m people landed here and Smao n pre-empted it as a hunting-ground.

Origin Myth of Askɬta.

In the beginning of time Aɬquntam sent down to Askɬta, Salmon House on the Salmon River, Noakila, his younger brother Tcaqos, and their sister Snutkanals, "Box", so named from a supernatural box in the land above. Noakila brought with him as provisions the steel-head salmon, and Tcaqos the caribou. Each released his food supply, and the footprints of the caribou can still be seen, graved in the rocks near Salmon House, while ever since that time there have been many steel-head salmon in the Salmon River. Tcaqos at once moved inland to the country of the Carrier Indians (1), where he remained. His name was corrupted by them to Qaqos, in which form it is still in use among the Carriers.

Noakila was lonely and unhappy, unprovided with a house or clothing. For four hungry days he lay inert and despondent, alone with his sister. Aɬquntam had promised to provide for his welfare, and, four days after Noakila's landing, sent down the four supernatural carpenters to help him. Yulatimut at once cheered his drooping spirits by building him a house, which was a replica of Nusmat a itself. Noakila asked the third carpenter, Matɬa lixw k, to provide him with food, and the latter, obedient to Aɬquntam's instructions, whittled a steel-head salmon from maple wood and put it into the river. The fish came to life, swam and jumped for a short time, but soon died. The carpenter tried several times, but each salmon died. Then Raven appeared and gave him the bone which every stell-head salmon has it the back of its neck. Matɬa lixw k put this bone in one of his wooden models, and when he had thrown it in the river it swam strongly. This fish multiplied so rapidly that Noakila and his sister were able to support themselves on salmon, and ever since that time they have been plentiful in the Salmon River.

After a time Noakila decided to visit the people dwelling on the ocean. He asked Matɬ lixw k for a canoe, and the carpenter made him one that was virtually an enormous merganser. At that time the Salmon River disappeared beneath the earth a short distance above the sea. The merganser canoe shattered the rock

(1). The obvious assumption that the Carr ers must already have been in th ...oes not appeal to the Bella Coola. He does not philosophize on the subject, b replies that they too were sent down from above at the same time.
(2). For another version of this myth see Boas, page 66.

and since that time the Salmon River has been open throughout its course. The canyon on this river marks the site of the barring rock.

At the mouth of the Salmon River Noakila met Xemoua and married his sister Qakm . Many children resulted and ever since that time there have been intermarriages and friendly relations between the people of Salmon House and Kimsquit.

The names embodied in this myth are still in use. My informant used the name Noakila at a potlatch during the winter of 1921. This name had been dormant since the death of the eighth Noakila, an old man, which took place some thirty years ago. (1). To illustrate this myth a representation is made of the merganser canoe, a specimen of this, obtained by Mr. Harlan I. Smith, is now in the Victoria Memorial Museum, Ottawa.

There is another version of this myth, according to which Noakila and his party came to earth at Anaham Lake, in the country of the Carriers, bringing with them the steel-head salmon. They first went to Stu x, but Noakila did not like this place so released only a few of the fish. They returned to Anaham Lake, and from there went to Salmon House. They found this spot so desirable that they settled and released their store of steel-head salmon. That is the reason why this fish is so plentiful in the Salmon River, and so rare in the Bella Coola.

(1). This was the only instance given to the writer of an approximation of the interval since the first peopling of the earth. The Bella Bella usually reply, "Long, long ago", and have not philosophized further. This myth was received from Jim Pollard, a reliable informant, but the writer feels sure that his statement concerning the "eighth" Noakila would not find credence among most Bella Coola. Even if it shoule be the eighth Noakila, that furnishes little guide to the age when the Bella Coola believe the earth to have been populated, since names may remain dormant for generations.

Origin Myth of Nut 1. (1)

In the beginning of time there came down to Mt. Swakx, near the mouth of the Salmon River, Two brothers, Xemcua and Sinux tł, their sister Qakm , and their herald Qaqat li. Xemcua came as an eagle but at once assumed human form, and apparently the others had always been human. They moved down and formed a settlement at Nut 1, near the mouth of the Salmon River. Xemcua had brought with him as a present from Alquntam, some olachens, called by their supernatural name, alqexaiy n a, which he threw into the water. They increased rapidly and became the ancestors of all the olachens at Kimsquit. Thus provided with food the brothers prospered so that they were able to give many potlatches. In course of time Qakm was married to Noakila, a chief who had come to earth on the upper ~~xxkxxxxxfxtkx~~ Salmon River.

At one of their potlatches Sinux tł performed a tłaiyak m dance, as Alquntam had instructed him to do before leaving Nusmat a. Valuable presents were distributed to validate the name, Tłaiyak m, which Sinux tł had chosen for himself.

Sinux tł married a Bella Bella woman who brought with her the prerogative of a dance with respect to the devil-fish. In Bella Bella this rite was connected both with the kusiut and the s saok, but in Kimsquit it was performed only as a kusiut dance. It was first performed by ~~kulqwan~~ there i, a relative of Sinux tł, and has since been performed in like fashion in Kimsquit. Sinux tł's wife bore him a daughter who received the Bella Bella name, X lasu, which has since remained in Kimsquit.

It was impossible to obtain a version of the above myth from any of the descendants of Xemcua; it is unlikely that more than the broad outlines of the myth are here given.

(1). For another version see Boas 65.

Fragments of Nutłe x Origin Myths.

JM 2901 In the very beginning of time, before ~~the~~ heaven was made, Alquntam sent down to Nutłe x three brothers and their two sisters. The names by which they have been remembered are Masonx^{w}, Kamalsonx^{w}, Sonxwaak s, and their sisters, Sonxwan a and xł xwan i. The last mentioned refused to become human, instead wandered around in a semi-human condition, becoming frenzied at the slightest excuse. At length her disgusted brothers and sister united to cast her forth, and she became petrified in the valley which still bears her name, and which still has an evil reputation as the coldest place in the vicinity of Bella Coola. From herecome the cold winds. (1).

Alquntam instructed his carpenters to construct a Sonx^{w} . They set about their task, but failed to use any supporting posts so that, when it had almost been completed,it fell. ~~This~~ Only a small section in the east ~~xxxxixxxdx~~ remained. When the carpenters recommenced their work they took care to erect posts to bear the weight, and so were able to construct heaven as it is to-day. When their task was completed the supports were removed. Only those living at Nutłe x witnessed this disaster, and from it they took their names. Kamalsonx^{w} was the name of this first Sonx^{w} that fell.

According to another informant the first settler at Nutłe x was u usonx^{w} , who had also the name Xenxemlaix. He came to earth in the form of a beaver, bringing a salmon-weir as means of sustenance.

The following fragmentary myth was also obtained.

(1). For further particulars of xł xwan i see pages

JM 638 Fragment of a Snutɬ tɬ Origin Myth.

In the beginning of time the sun sent down to Snutɬ tɬ a number of brothers and their sister. The names of these have been forgotten except of the oldest brother, Tiakwala. He had brought with him as provender the beaver, and when he released one of these animals it increased to furnish abundant food for all the party. From this beaver was the ancestor of all the beaver of the Bella Coola valley. Owing to their position on the upperwaters of the Bella Coola River, Tiakwala and his brothers considered that they were nearer to the sun than any other Bella Coola, and were very proud of this. Since they had been sent down by the sun, moreover, he was their kwalit nta. The sun had instructed Tiakwala how to make a salmon-weir, supported by two logs resting on a middle rock in the middle of the Bella Coola River, which was thus spanned. In this trap they caught so many salmon that Tiakwala and his brothers were able to call people from far and near to potlatches. In course of time Tiakwala's sisters were married to chiefs of other towns. When one of Tiakwala's brothers-in-law gave a potlatch he was able, on account of his teeming salmon, to "rebuy" his sisterson a generous scale. The sun had taught these women a song to be used on such occasions. This song has since been used by their descendants when "rebuying" themselves from their husbands.

Years, or perhaps hundreds of years, after the settlement of Snutɬ tɬ the stone which supported their salmon-weir broke, and the ruins were swept down the river. Then all the Snutɬ tɬ people cut their hair, blackened their faces in mourning, and moved to Stuɯ.

Taiakwala made a long voyage of exploration on which he reached the Skeena River. He made friends with the inhabitants of the town Qsxwan, from whom he obtained the name Xw ɬ on (1) which means "whale" in their language. Continuing his journey, he ultimately circled the earth before returning home. Among other names, he obtained that of Aits mka from the people of Gwatna. Both of these names are still in use among his descendants.

Years, or perhaps hundreds of years, after the settlement of Snutɬ tɬ, the stone supporting their salmon-weir broke, and the ruins were swept down the river. Then all the people of Snutɬ tɬ cut their hair, blackened their faces in mourning, and moved to Stu x.

(1). It appears certain that Xw ɬ on is an attempt to pronounce the English word "whale-bone", thus furnishing an interesting example of the way in which modern words have become incorporated in ancient myths and clothed with the glamor of antiquity.

J P 744&748 Origin Myth of Siwal os.

Soon after the first people had reached this earth Alquntam feared that as they increased they might quarrel about land tenure. Accordingly he sent down to Siwal os three Laliaxsa, a name often used by women, two brothers, syuyuyut and Alquntam, with their sister Sx pe tl, and gave the elder brother instructions to allot the land to the different villages. Alquntam came in the guise of a mountain-goat, but promptly sent his goat garment back to the land above, and started down the Salmon River. To each village he allotted certain valleys in the vicinity to serve as hunting-grounds, and told the people that these, and only these, were to be theirs forever. After reaching the coast he travelled down Dean Inlet as far as the Bella Bella country, likewise allotting land to the different settlements. He erected a stick to mark each boundary. After completing his task Alquntam returned up the Salmon River to his brothers. The three built a salmon-trap that completely spanned the river, and in they caught so many salmon-trout that the Carriers used to come from great distances to buy from them. Sx pe tl was married to a chief living on the lower part of the Salmon River, and her brothers too came below for their wives.

syuyuyut had come from above in the form of a deer. After taking off his deer form he animated it as a deer, which became the ancestor of all the deer near Kimsquit. These animals did not like Siwal os, where it was very cold, so they moved to Nihtc ks, on Dean Inlet, about three miles below Kimsquit. Here they built their town. Unfortunately the snowfall was so heavy that they had much trouble in lighting their fires, as sometimes as much as ten feet of snow fell in a single night.

"Please, Laliax s," said the Deer, "don't keep falling on us."

In the language of men "Snow" is kai, and Laliax s means, "Copper One", but the language of deer is quite different. The snow, unmoved by their appeals, continued to fall. At last the deer held a meeting and resolved to move away to the outer coast near Bella Bella and never more return to Kimsquit. They carried out this plan, and it is only within the last few years that a few deer have returned, although for centuries no deer lived near Kimsquit.

Origin Myth of Ax t i.

In the beginning of time there came to Ax t i, on the east side of the Salmon River, about one mile from the sea, a single man, Swaak s. Nothing a is known of him except that he brought as a present from Alquntam a stone hammer.

Repeated reference has been made to origin myths, and it is now necessary to give examples of these. In 1898 Professor Boas published such an admirable collection of myths of this type (1) that the present writer paid little attention to the subject, realizing that little could be gained by working over any ground already covered by Boas. The Bella Coola are so intensely proud of their origin myths that several of them insisted on recounting the deeds of their ancestors before being willing to do other work, in consequence a fair number of myths were collected through necessity. The following collection must be regarded in this light, and not as an attempt to make an exhaustive survey of the Bella Coola origin myths. They were recounted, moreover, almost entirely at potlatches, and since the prohibition of this rite exact knowledge of origin myths has waned. It would require much time and labour to collect, from various informants, the outlines of the myths, and from these outlines to present a coherent whole. The writer made no effort to do this, which will explain the numerous fragmentary and incomplete versions among the following.

Professor Boas has clearly outlined the Bella Coola pattern of origin myths, and the present writer has little to add. They describe how, in the beginning of time, the supreme god sent down to earth the first ancestors of the Bella Coola people, each privided with means of sustenance. The right to use the names of these people, as well as to use ceremonial objects used by them, has been the privilege of their descendants. But these early Bella Coola, like their modern descendants, had several names, each carrying with it a definite prerogative. Thus in a single myth there may be embodied a dozen or more names and incidents which are quoted at the present day to authorize different types of dances, right to hunting-grounds, professions, or other phases of Bella Coola activity. It has accordingly been impossible to avoid mention of the origin of many kusiut dances, which will be described in a later chapter. It will suffice to say that each of these is a dramatic representation of the action of some supernatural being, in which the performer may be a "Cannibal", a "Breaker", or one of many other kusiut rites. Any myth which gives the origin of a name, a dance, or any other prerogative, is termed

(1) Page 50 sq.

or was in the old days,
a smaiusta. Each of these is,remembered with very great care, and not recounted except to those who had a right to such a myth through the possession of a name embodied in it. Even all such did not know the full details if it was thought that they were of a flighty, garrulous disposition, and unlikely to preserve the myth with dignity. All those who had names embodied in a single myth regarded themselves as of one family, as indeed they usually were, and it was customary to choose some young member of the family to be the guardian of the family myth. One old woman described vividly to the writer how,when she was a young girl, her grandfather had been inthe habit of taking her to bed with him, and reciting myths to her time and again, his mouth pressed close against her ear, and his hand over her anus to prevent the escape of his words. It became recognized among her family that it was she who knew the myth better than anyone else and when anyone wished to use a portion of it, the singers would come to her for details. She had no mor right to the myth than any of her realtives, it was merely that it was in her safe-keeping. Even at the present time there would be much hard feelong if anyone should dare use a myth smaiusta to which he was not entitled. Boas (1) states that the terms smaiusta and s mama are synonymous. The writer heard the two t rms used many timesin conversation with Indians, and never found the slightest doubt as to their meanings, but he never found them identical. A s mama is a story which can be told by anyone, a smaiusta is an origin myth; psychologically and sociologically they are distinct.

Historically, there is no doubt that a s mama has often become a smaiusta. If one of the early people saw a strange sight, and an account was given of it, that account is a s mama. But if that man obtained a name, or other prerogative, from what he saw, then the account becomes a smaiusta. Unquestionably those rich enough to give potlatches have often taken as theme for dramatice representation, the event described in a s mama, and claimed that the hero of the tale was an ancestor. If it was an almost forgotten story there would have been little difficulty, but in any case the prestige attached to the giver of a great potlatch would have sufficed to overrule objections. Thus it is that elements of the s mama type occur so frequently in the following smaiusta. In fact, in one example, one informant gave

The writer feels certain that this is an error. He discussed the matter repeatedly with various Bella Coola, who were consistent in saying that a s mama is a mere story such as can be told by anyone, whereas a smaiusta is a myth authorizing a prerogative of some time, and as such is the possession of the individual, or individuals, whose prerogatives are derived from it. To the Bella Coola the two are radimxkky utterly different.

None the less, there is no doubt that records of the past change from one category to the other. A wealthy chief, eager to give a potlatch, but lacking the mythical authorization, must frequently have used a s mama and claimed the hero as an ancestor. Unquestionably there would be veiled amusement at him for doing so, but the individual prestige of one who can give potlatches is so great that in time his claim would probably be accepted. The two versions of the myth given on pages

is a case in point. The first version was received as a smaiusta from a woman who claimed to be a descendant of the people figuring in it. A second version was received as a s mama story, from a second man. In view of the reliability of both informants, it seems highly probablt that this is a case of a story which is partially converted to a myth. In other examples there appear incidents xxxxxxxxg resembling the supernatural stories given on pages , and here too it appears probable that s mama have been assimilated into a smaiusta. It is complimentary to the truthfulness of the Bella Coola, and for the respect which they show to myths which belong to others, that the writer received no stories which he has reason to believe are smaiusta belonging to others. Repeatedly an informant would say that he knew a smaiusta, but would not tell it since it belonged to some other family.

After collecting a few myths, in each of which it was staed that the first settlers at xxxxxxxxxxxxx village x X were A, B, C, with their sisters, P and Q, the writer was led to believe that it would be possible, or would have been before the culture of the Bella Coola had fallen into its present decay, to make a census of the first settlers of this earth. It was soon found that this would not be possible. Two myths frequently give different people as the first occupants of a certain village, nor does suchxcontradiction trouble the Bella Coola. Each man, convinced of the authenticity of his own family myth, is quite willing to believe that

the myth belonging to someone else is likewise correct; its contradiction to his own is a matter of no consequence. This attitude ~~mtk~~ of universal belief is one of the strongest characteristics of the Bella Coola. Boas (1) likewise found an instance in which there was uncertainty as to the first occupants of a village, though, on the whole, he found the system of Bella Coola myths more codified than the present writer. In view of their lack of systematization in other matters it would have been surprising if the Bella Coola had evolved a ~~xxxxxxx~~ census, agreeable in details to all, of their first ancestors.

Another matter to be considered at this point is the similarity of deatil in many myths. In part this can be explained by the assumption that s mama have beeen elevated into myths, in which case it would not be impossible ~~xx~~ for the same story to have been so elevated by two different families. A more common explanation must have been the splitting of myths. Although, theoretically, a myth can never be altered, and portions in the po ssession of other~~x~~ individuals are remembered as such, there must have been many cases in which the owner of a section of a myth told the whole of it as his own property. This would ~~xx~~ not be difficult in cases where he moved away from the other members of his family. In course of time, with the assimilation of elements in themselves not strictly mythological, two myths would evolve having a few incidents in common. If asked concerning this, the Bella Coola would answer that the first people were quite as capable of doing the same things as two modern men. The occurrence of the same names, or names, in different myths does not, according to the Bella Coola, prove a connection between them~~x~~ since many of the first people had the same names.

Finally there have been included a number of myths dealing with the coming to earth of people in regions other than Bella Coola. It is probablt that these are, in origin, the myths of other tribes, more or less assimilated to the Bella Coola type. According to my informants, each of these myths came to Bella Coola by the marriage of one of the descendants of these people with a Bella Coola man or woman.

No further explanation is needed for the following myths which are arranged, as far as possible, according to the list already given of Bella Coola towns.

(1) Page 61.